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# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**
**Twenty-fifth session**
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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
**Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

## Report provided by specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

### Note by the Secretary-General

**Addendum**

### Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to submit to the Committee a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in areas falling within the scope of its activities, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of the States parties to the Convention which will be considered at the twenty-fifth session. Annexed to the present note are three country briefs, prepared by FAO, on Guinea, Uruguay and Sri Lanka.

2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation of the Convention.

3. The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

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## Annex I

### Twenty-fifth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Report on Guinea

Guinea's population of 7.36 million people in 2000 was composed of 49.7 per cent women and 50.3 per cent men. Its economy is mainly based on the development of the agriculture sector, the principal source of employment. Indeed, while 64 per cent of the population lives in the rural areas, 84 per cent of the active population — 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men — derives its livelihood from farming. Moreover, the agriculture sector is one of the country's main sources of economic growth. It accounts for 21 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

There is an annual demand of 750,000 tons of rice, the staple food of Guineans. However, persistent political tension along Guinea's southern borders and the resultant prolonged presence of refugees, especially in the rural areas, have been putting tremendous pressure on its natural resources. Population movements and a rise in the cost of living have also had a considerable impact on crop yields and on the food situation of the population, about 40.3 per cent of which lives below the poverty line. In addition, the sharp rise in petroleum product prices coupled with shrinking external assistance are further weakening the economy.

Guinea has been implementing an agricultural development policy since 1986. The country's development plan is defined in the global development strategy called "Guinea Vision 2010", which comprises the letter of intent on agricultural development policy, the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Guinea and the sustainable human development programme, all of which form part of the Government's strategic vision of the fight against poverty. The letter of intent on agricultural development policy prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry together with the national workshop on the agricultural development strategy for 2010, define the guidelines for agricultural development policy in the medium term. Thus, the aim is to foster and encourage the growing of new crops, such as potatoes and onions, and the development of market garden crops in order to diversify supply and therefore satisfy food and nutritional needs not covered by rice. The main objective is to reduce rice imports and diversify food through the development of other food crops in order to reduce dependence on rice. The organization of the rural areas through the establishment of farmers' organizations based on production sectors and natural regions, as well as the establishment of regional chambers of agriculture, will help to implement this policy.

However, efforts to develop agricultural, livestock, fishery and forestry production as well as Guinea's rural sector, have been plagued by several obstacles, such as poor rural infrastructure and facilities, the low technical level and poor management of farms and institutional weaknesses of State services, the private sector as well as of farmers' organizations. Moreover, the geomorphology of Guinea is such that most arable land in the rain belt consists of wooded hillsides, the clearing of which leads to rapid erosion. Such erosion occurs all the more quickly as the population growth rate of 3.1 per cent and the large number of refugees reduce the fallow period which in the past permitted a relatively satisfactory regeneration of

soil fertility. Sustainable natural resources management would therefore help to alleviate poverty and reduce food insecurity.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which has been a key partner of the country for a long time, enjoys the trust of the Government, the rural population and donors. It was thus at the instigation of FAO that the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) comprising four components — harnessing water and land development; sustainable agricultural activities; diversification of activities; and analysis of constraints — was launched. The goal of SPFS is to allow the country to exploit its natural resources in a sustainable manner and to boost food production and yields while easing pressure on the fragile soils.

Interaction between activities financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in areas falling within the scope of FAO and FAO-sponsored activities is encouraged through SPFS and projects under the Technical Cooperation Programme. The FAO/World Bank cooperation programme is also very dynamic and covers the priority areas of rural infrastructure, soil fertility, security of land tenure, assistance to village communities, agricultural commodity exports and food security.

FAO was particularly involved in the implementation of the national agricultural census, including trying to obtain gender-desegregated data. The census conducted in 2000 yielded new data which will be used as a source of information for the implementation of new capacity-building and skills improvement projects for rural women in order to boost their earnings. The collection and analysis of these data are critical to heightening the authorities' awareness of the role of women, since women are usually the main breadwinners of the household. Thus, improving their access to resources and services will lead to increased agricultural productivity, a more rational use of resources and greater yield from the land, thus responding to one of the main concerns of the Guanine Government.

The commitment of FAO since 1999 to strengthening the role of women in Guinea's development should therefore be highlighted. It should be recalled that the FAO Plan of Action for strengthening the role of women in development provides for assistance for any project that facilitates women's access to means of production and their control over the fruits of their labour, as well as support for any women's production activities designed to alleviate poverty and guarantee food security. Efforts have thus been undertaken to enhance the authorities' awareness of the importance of women's participation in rural development and of the subsequent impact on household income. The cooperation programme therefore meets needs in the country and covers the priority areas of rural infrastructure, support for village communities and for exports of agricultural commodities as well as food security.

FAO supported the project on market gardening cooperatives in the Kobayah and Forécariah regions. The benefits in terms of food production, employment and income from this activity have been acknowledged, especially for mothers in the urban and peri-urban areas. Yet, women in this sector have been experiencing many institutional problems (lack of secure land tenure, lack of supervision and training) as well as agronomic problems (poor production techniques, unfamiliarity with crop species, diseases ...). In this regard, the FAO projects provide for the supply of the necessary inputs to beneficiaries in order to enable them to increase their yields and income. Briefing sessions have been planned for the local authorities responsible for supervising this project.

Provision of support for the development of dairy products by the NAFAYA women's cooperative in the commune of Pita as well as for the development of traditional poultry farming by the women's cooperatives of Boffa, Kindia and Forécariah is in response to the same need. Women should therefore be trained in how to manage their activities so as to increase production and profits. The process entails the purchase and distribution to beneficiaries by the local FAO representative of inputs and farm implements as well as the provision of funds. Another aim is to participate in the construction and maintenance of livestock infrastructure, including hen houses; provide livestock equipment and training, and undertake vaccination.

In 2000, the programme of activities in the field for women was expanded to include assisting women's fish wholesalers' cooperatives in the Boulbinet region in their efforts to boost sales of fresh fish. By developing fish farming, the Government and FAO are developing a sub-sector that helps to increase food security and reduce poverty in the rural areas. This entails the establishment of an operational structure, training and supervision. The participatory approach proposed has tried to involve as many women as possible in the activity. Moreover, the assistance provided for yam production in the Kankan Prefecture is aimed at boosting output of that crop as part of the efforts to achieve food security. These activities are in line with one of the plan's objectives: to increase the benefits that rural women derive from their contribution to agriculture — sustainable rural development — while facilitating their participation in national development.

FAO therefore participates in national capacity-building through its training and technical assistance activities. Its plans of action are centred around activities that generate the supplementary income required by women to provide for their families. They are also activities where women are heavily represented and that need to be developed in order to highlight their role. The diversification of production capacity made possible by the training and technical and financial support provided by FAO is tangible proof that women's role in economic development is taken into account.

In 2000, there was an increase in the number of projects concerning women, including projects to boost the production of improved rice seeds and projects for providing training in the processing and drying of fruits. These projects are coordinated by various FAO services.

# Annex II

## Report on Uruguay

Uruguay is not an agricultural country. According to FAO statistics, out of 3.3 million inhabitants, only 9 per cent live in rural areas, with 13 per cent of the work force employed in the agricultural sector, of which 12 per cent are women and 88 per cent men.

The economy of Uruguay is closely tied to international conditions. It is oriented towards exports and despite a 2 per cent rise in GDP in 2000, has been affected mainly by fluctuations in the economies of Argentina and Brazil, its two main trading partners. Its main exports are meat, wool and milk. The fall in meat consumption and production because of the foot and mouth disease epidemic has adversely affected purchasing power (a drop of 2.8 per cent) and the country's trade balance. Higher oil prices, a record unemployment level and the ongoing structural adjustment programme have prolonged the country's stagnation, even recession.

The foot and mouth disease epidemic has highlighted the need for the country to diversify its production and to support other food crops. Although the trend towards immigration and rural exodus seems to be stopping, the concentration of farms continues. The number of grain producers has declined by a third over 10 years in favour of the meat sector, with a similar decline in the number of sheep farmers. On the other hand, the amount of acreage used in milk and wine production has increased, although less than 13 per cent of producers are involved. Poor climatic conditions and weakening markets have forced producers to promote the growing of maize for their own consumption. Drought destroyed 70 per cent of the 2000 crop, which is causing a food supply problem.

The Government has therefore drawn up an emergency plan with a view to diversifying production. Special attention was paid to the problem of debt, protection of agriculture and such financial support measures as subsidies. Moreover, the Government has stressed the development of aquaculture at the national level, as the country has abundant natural resources in that area. The economy must be opened up in the framework of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), and the problem of imports confronted, especially of consumer goods, intermediate goods and equipment. A particular effort in the area of the health of livestock has been carried out by the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries with FAO for effective monitoring in the north of the country.

FAO participates in training projects for the leaders of rural women's groups and projects to promote rural development. Several organizations, such as the Commission on Rural Women or non-governmental organizations like Caritas Uruguay participate in these projects. They are part of the FAO plan of action for Women in Development (1996-2001), which also aims to integrate gender in carrying out development initiatives.

In the implementation of the Plan, FAO activities are focused on four interdependent areas:

- Increased availability, precision and utilization of quantitative and qualitative data and information on the place which women hold in agriculture and rural development;

- Development and utilization of methodologies, instruments and training activities to help development specialists, at FAO and in Member States, to integrate a perspective that takes into account male/female relationships in approaches to agricultural and rural development;
- Strengthening of the skills and capacity of rural women to increase their economic gains while reducing their burden of labour;
- Support for the formulation and implementation of an agricultural and rural development policy that takes male/female relationships into account.

The project on formulating communication, training and information methodology extends the concern for balance in rural development. To FAO, sustainable development with a human face achieves maximum effectiveness only if the people are involved and motivated, and if information and knowledge are shared. Participatory methods of communication help to establish a dialogue among rural people, and among men and women and to facilitate their involvement in decision-making. Communication methods and techniques have not been utilized sufficiently to meet the specific needs of rural women, who must therefore, be provided with the means to become involved in decision-making.

In cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), therefore, the Regional Office has supported research on the training and employment of rural women in order to identify the priority issues to take into account in defining rural development and agricultural policies. In Latin America, and especially in Uruguay, the FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development also focuses on the procedures for institutional surveys of the rights of women in the agricultural sector. Indeed, there are many legal obstacles preventing rural women from gaining access to land, especially in cases of inheritance. As in other countries, the legal rights of women to join cooperative movements are limited. The issue of access to land is thus tied to agrarian reform. The recommendations stress the need to undertake legal reforms to guarantee equal rights for men and women. This institutional change in the country would thus complement reforms already begun in neighbouring countries.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, FAO is also working on a project to design and distribute instructional brochures on health. Women the world over are the main guarantors of nutrition and food safety and quality, and they should have access to information and technical assistance to increase the quality and healthfulness of products and to improve the nutritional status of their households. The need to distribute instructional brochures has increased with the foot and mouth disease problems. Women are thus very involved in the project.

An analysis of the industrial fisheries sector in Latin America took gender issues into consideration. A bibliography was prepared. During 2000, support was given for establishing a network for women working in the fisheries sector (Infopesca) and for creating an Internet site, a modern tool to raise their awareness of this activity, which also facilitates the exchange of information both on technical matters and concerning production management. This action is intended to support women's autonomy in controlling their activities.

The FAO regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean has launched a web site for women (www.rlc.fao.org/mujer). The site underlines the importance of the gender perspective in rural and agricultural development in the region. It also provides information on possibilities for training and links to other women's sites and organizations.

# Annex III

## Report on Sri Lanka

According to the FAO statistics, in 1999 the population of Sri Lanka was estimated at 18.7 million, of which 76.8 per cent lived in rural areas and 23.2 per cent in urban areas; 46.6 per cent are active in agriculture of which 37 per cent are women and 62 per cent are men.

FAO and its Regional Office in Asia and the Pacific (RAP) are engaged in many projects aiming at improving rural people's situation in Sri Lanka. Technical assistance was provided to improve the efficiency of services where women's contributions are high. It concerns the livestock, agricultural and fisheries sectors. Several programmes have been implemented namely for the reconstruction and the rehabilitation in the North. A project proposal for improving income-generating capacities of rural people with disabilities has been developed. FAO has also been involved in wildlife conservation and protected area planning. These programmes and projects promote the equal participation of rural population in the activities and take into consideration women's contribution.

In order to support effective and equitable agricultural and rural development, policy makers and planners in Sri Lanka are invited to collect and analyse additional data in certain areas of women's concern; formulate policies and plans to provide both rural women and men with access to and control over resources, particularly land; and make policy and planning participatory as well as gender-sensitive.

FAO and its Regional Office in Asia and the Pacific (RAP) have conducted studies on "Gender Dimensions in Biodiversity" in Sri Lanka. A multidisciplinary technical consultation on gender issues in biodiversity management was organized in order to provide the Government with recommendations to national actions. Analyses were undertaken in order to appraise the existing situation so that the Government could design suitable strategies integrating gender concerns in its planning and implementation.

Different divisions in FAO took part in making a critical assessment of the role of women in crop production, their access to production inputs, their specific needs and constraints. The objective was to determine appropriate and sustainable methods to recognize women's initiative in local development and their knowledge of the production system. Based on the above analysis, suitable strategy for agricultural sector and key sub-sector should integrate gender concerns in programme planning and implementation. The economic and social analysis of the assessment has highlighted the women's situation as regards agricultural credit and technical services. The FAO study took into consideration women's rights in their search for funds as well as their status in the land tenure. It identified the major constraints confronting women towards bank and other credit systems. It has also included a section on the distribution, marketing of farm products and agro-processing in order to develop feasible project outlines to be implemented with technical and financial assistance from various cooperating agencies in future. A comprehensive report was given to the Government.

A similar assessment was done on the role of women in fisheries as regards their access to essential inputs and services. It contributed to the restoration of this sub-sector as a viable commercial enterprise. Provision of Agricultural and Fisheries

Inputs, technical assistance to improve the efficiency of services for the livestock sector were made in response to the government requirement. Studies in 1999 made a comprehensive review of the current situation before development of the Plan of Action for fishery sectors in order to enhance and sustain food production. This action plan integrated data on gender situation, incorporated experiences learned and prioritized interventions.

In 2000, a study led by RAP concerned the women's need due to the war. An assessment was made about the severity of nutritional inadequacy among the internally displaced persons and returning farm families, especially among women and children.